

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-13

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 SAM-01 IO-14 DRC-01 /142 W

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R 021550Z FEB 74

FM USINT CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5214

INFO AMEMBASY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 0545

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR EG

SUBJECT: HEYKAL TO BE SADAT PRESS AIDE; HATEM TO AHARAM

1. SUMMARY: HEYKAL HAS BEEN NAMED PRESIDENTIAL PRESS ADVISOR AND DEPUTY PM HATEM APPOINTED TO HEAD THE AHARAM ESTABLISHMENT. HEYKAL'S CONTINUING DIRECT AND INDIRECT CRITICISM OF DISENGAGEMENT AND HATEM'S REPUTATION AS A NO-NONSENSE ADMINISTRATOR INCLINE USINT TO INTERPRET THE SHIFT AS AN EFFORT BY SADAT TO MUZZLE HEYKAL. BUT ONLY TIME WILL TELL. END SUMMARY.

2. ON FEB. 1 PRESIDENT SADAT APPOINTED HEYKAL TO BE PRESIDENTIAL PRESS ADVISOR, A POST WHICH HAS BEEN VACANT SINCE THE DEPARTURE OF ASHRAF GHORBAL. (THERE ARE REPORTS THAT TAHSIN BASHIR, THE ACTING PRESS ADVISOR, IS TO GO TO LONDON AS INFORMATION COUNSELOR IN THE EGYPTIAN EMBASSY). IN A SECOND DECREE, ISSUED IN HIS CAPACITY AS HEAD OF THE ASU, SADAT HAS APPOINTED DEPUTY PM HATEM TO BE CHAIRMAN OF THE AHARAM ESTABLISHMENT. HE WILL RETAIN HIS OTHER POSTS, INCLUDING THAT OF MINISTER
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OF INFORMATION.

3. COMMENT: AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, RUMORS ARE FLYING THICK AND FAST AS TO REASONS FOR AND SIGNIFICANCE OF HEYKAL'S PRESIDENTIALLY IMPOSED TRANSFER AND HATEM'S TAKING OVER AHAM ESTABLISHMENT. IT IS PROBABLE, THOUGH NOT YET CLEAR, THAT HEYKAL HAS ALSO BEEN REMOVED FROM HIS POST AS AHAM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF. AHAM CORRESPONDENT AMDI FOUAD SOUGHT TODAY TO PUT BEST FACE POSSIBLE ON TRANSFER AND TOLD US SADAT WANTS HEYKAL CLOSER TO HIM. THIS MAY BE SO, BUT IT LEAVES UNANSWERED THE QUESTION WHY.

4. OUR PRELIMINARY ASSESMENT IS THAT SADAT HAS FINALLY HAD ENOUGH OF HEYKAL'S CONTINUED CARPING ABOUT DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT, PUBLICLY EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM ABOUT US INTENTIONS AT VERY TIME SADAT IS ATTEMPTING STRENGTHEN

RELATIONS WITH USG, AND HIS CONTINUED PRIVATE WARNINGS GOE MAY BE WALKING INTO TRAP. IMPLICIT IN SUCH CRITICISM, EVEN IF NEVER OPENLY STATED, IS THAT SADAT HAS BEHAVED SHORTSIGHTEDLY. SADAT IS ALSO DOUBTLESS AWARE THAT AHAM ESTABLISHMENT HAS BEEN A COTERIE OF LEFT WING, INTELLECTUAL CRITICISM OF DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT. CONCEIVABLY, HEYKAL'S SHARP CONDEMNATION OF US FOREIGN POLICY AND ITS PURPOSES IN YESTERDAY'S (FEBRUARY 1) AHAM MAY HAVE BEEN THE STRAW THAT BROKE THE CAMEL'S BACK.

5. TEXT AVAILABLE THROUGH FBIS, BUT HEYKAL SUGGESTED INTER ALIA THAT "STAR" QUALITY OF SECRETARY KISSINGER WAS A TEMPORARY ELEMENT IN US FOREIGN POLICY WHICH WOULD BE INSUFFICIENT TO CHANGE BASIC LINES OF THAT POLICY. THESE HE DEFINED AS PROTECTION OF ISRAEL, INCREASED OIL FLOW AT REASONABLE PRICE, EXPELLING SOVIETS FROM ARAB WORLD, RECOVERING US INFLUENCE, AND, SIGNIFICANTLY, "PREVENTING EMERGENCE OF A BIG ARAB POWER INCLUDING UNDERMINING THE ROLE EGYPT MUST PLAY, AND OBSTRUCTING UNION AMONG THE ARAB COUNTRIES." ADDITIONALLY, HEYKAL ASSERTED THAT "THERE IS REASON TO BELIEVE" THAT SEVERAL HUNDRED US ELECTRONICS SPECIALISTS WITH US ELECTRONICS WEAPONS PARTICIPATED IN OCTOBER WAR AGAINST EGYPTIAN FORCES AND THAT HE WAS CERTAIN CONFIDENTIAL

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USG HAD EARLIER MADE CONTINGENCY PLAN TO OCCUPY ABU DHABI. SUCH CRITICAL COMMENT OF US IS UNQUESTIONABLY EMBARRASSING SADAT AT THIS DIFFICULT JUNCTURE INsofar AS IT MAKES IT DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO JUSTIFY AT HOME AND ABROAD HIS POLICY OF STRENGTHENING RELATIONS WITH USG. HEYKAL IS TOO PROMINENT TO REMOVE PERMANENTLY, BUT BY MAKING HIM OFFICIAL PRESIDENTIAL PRESS ADVISOR SADAT PROBABLY HOPES TO CURB THE ERRANT HEYKAL'S INDEPENDENCE AND LIMIT HIM

TO OFFICIAL PRONOUNCEMENTS. WHETHER THE IRREPRESSIBLE
HEYKAL CAN BE KEPT IN LINE REMAINS TO BE SEEN.

6. HATEM'S CHOICE TO TAKE OVER THE AHRAH ESTABLISHMENT
IS PUZZLING. SADAT MADE THAT APPOINTMENT IN HIS ASU
CAPACITY, PRESUMABLY TO AVOID ANY SUGGESTION OF A GOE
TAKEOVER. SAME TIME, HATEM, AS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER IN
CHARGE AMONG OTHER THINGS OF INFORMATION, IS PERHAPS THE
LOGICAL CHOICE TO ASSURE THAT AHRAH ESTABLISHMENT STAYS
WITHIN ESTABLISHED GOE GUIDELINES. HATEM'S ROLE IN THE
EXPULSIONS YEAR OR SO AGO OF VARIOUS WRITERS FROM THE
WRITERS UNION HAS MADE HIM ANATHEMA TO AHRAH INTELLECTUAL
ESTABLISHMENT AND IT IS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE HOW MANY OF
THE LEADING INTELLECTUAL LIGHTS OF THAT ESTABLISHMENT
CAN WORK WITH HIM. THEY MAY HAVE TO TRIM THEIR SAILS OR
QUIT. GIVEN SADAT'S ACTION OF SOME TIME LATER IN REHABILI-
TATING VARIOUS EXPELLED JOURNALISTS, ONE MIGHT HAVE THOUGHT
THE PRESIDENT WOULD CHOOSE A MORE PALATABLE FIGURE THAN
HATEM TO RUN THE AHRAH ESTABLISHMENT. DECISION MAY HAVE
BEEN HASTILY ARRIVED AT, HOWEVER, AND HATEM PERMANENCY
IN THIS ADDITIONAL POSITION REMAINS TO BE SEEN.
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